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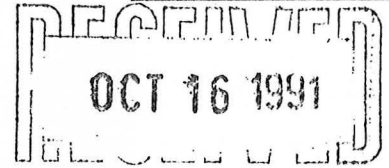
SUBJECT: History of Ceredo - Rocco's Rest.

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(Signature - Interviewee)

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(Address)

X

Huntington, WV 25705
(304) 529-4901

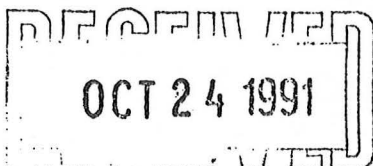
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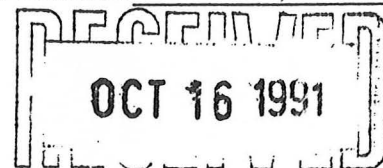
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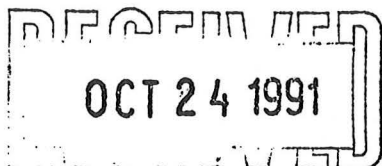
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Don: This is an interview conducted by me, Donovan Quesenberry, on 3 August 1984, at Real Estate Professionals on Rt. 60 across from the Gateway Inn. The interview is with Mrs. Evelyn Richards, a real estate agent here at Real Estate Professionals who is a good friend of Frank Lucente, and a patron of Rocco's. That's uh, Rocco's Restaurant of Ceredo-Kenova. Final note to whomever it may concern listening to this tape, please take into consideration that this is my first as an interviewer. So this is very informal. Uh...but uh, anyway. So uh, you were saying....

Evelyn: This house is out in Mayhood Hills, Mayhood Heights. It's Walker Branch Road, right...you know where Pilgrim Glass is, (right), as you go up to the airport, well, that's Walker's Branch Road. It goes out toward 75 and you cross a railroad track and you take a first right and it's the first house on the right. (oh, okay) Brand new...it's not finished yet. But for the amount of square footage and the amount of house, it's sixty-nine; it's a steal. It's got a big two-car unfinished garage (oh, it sounds nice), uh, two and a half baths, uh, cathedral ceiling, paddle fan, fireplace in the family room uh, it's really a super house.

Don: It sounds nice.

Evelyn: And you get it ...(inaudible)... There is bond money coming in, later on.

Don: I heard about that, 12% or something from the state.

Evelyn: Well, I don't know what it is. We none of us know what it is.

Don: They said 30 some million dollars, or was it 300 hundred million? (laughs) I don't remember now. That's true. But I remember it was a 3, the number 3 in there. I heard about it...where they're gonna have for low income housing for an individual who doesn't own a home or something like that can buy.

Evelyn: Well, we have WV (busing at 11.75 for first owner.

Don: Maybe that was it. But this was a new thing. I just heard it on the news not long ago.

Evelyn: Well, that's right...(inaudible)...mortgage. But I have not been able to find out anything on it. And nobody else on the floor today knew about it. (mmmh) So, I don't know what it is.

Don: So, why don't we get started then. (okay, yeah, 'cause I've got 3 o'clock, 3:15) Okay. We'll get this done real quick, then. Your name is...(I'm Evelyn Richards). And you work...

Evelyn: I work for Real Estate Professionals, as a real estate sales agent.

Don: Okay. And that is where we are now, we are at the Real Estate Professionals out on Rt. 60.

Evelyn: Yeah, it's right across from the Holiday Inn.

Don: Across from the Holiday Inn. (laughter) And you were just telling me a little bit about a piece of property that...that's gonna be up for sale soon and the uh, the interest rate situation. (correct) The purpose of course of our interview today is concerning Rocco's Restaurant, which is the uh, (The Rocco's I like Rocco's). Uh, when was the first time you ate at Rocco's?

Evelyn: Gosh, I was trying to think. When I use to own an Aviation business out there at the airport (right), and (that was at the Huntington downtown airport?) right. No, I went, yeah, when that was closed, I went over to Tri-State. (oh, okay) And this is right at the base, you know, coming up James River, that was before we had the interstate and Rt. 75 entrance, so I know I ate at Rocco's late '60's, well early '70's. I came over in '71 to Tri-State, so it was early '70. (early '70's) Yeah, that I had ate there the first time. And of course, I love Italian food (Oh, really). I just think...oh, yeah. I just think they do a superb job over there cooking. And it is not strong with garlic like you know, like everybody's italian food's got too much garlic in it. Well, this does not. I have not tasted it. And it doesn't bother me. And some garlicks do bother me. (right) But I think it's uh, a little restaurant, it's a small restaurant (right), but I think it's very warm and inviting. It's not overly done, it's not you know, cold or blank. Uh, anybody that's ever waited on me there is friendly (mmm-hmm). I'm not a big wine drinker but I usually have wine with my dinner (right). Uh, in fact one day we stopped there for lunch with the girls from the office, and it was hot. We had...we all had the big greek salad, uh, italian salads with greek olives and stuff. And it was just delightful but one of the girls was so thirsty and she's not accustomed to drinking and she just picked up that ice-cold win and ! (right down, unh?) She wasn't real sure what hit her later. (laughs) I went...when I watched her do that, I said, oh, you're gonna be sorry. (oh, that's...) But it's uh, they use nice crystal on the tables and it's inviting. It's...it's uh, as I said it's not so ornate that you feel uncomfortable, and in going in and not dressed in high-dud clothes but uh, it's just...a very comfortable place.

Don: Do you prefer a smaller restaurant like Rocco's to a large restaurant?

Evelyn: I don't care really for what you call a large, large restaurant, but there again you're usually with your own party and what difference does it make to what size? (right) As long as you know, you can converse (uh-huh), then...I've gone to restaurant in Ironton several times lately and it's a delightful place to go but one of the...the couple that we have gone with each time, he is hard of hearing, and they have a player piano and it's just real...one of those rin-tin-tin things or whatever that is, it's just so loud, you cannot...well, we have to move, you know, as far away from the piano as we can. (mmm-hmm) Uh...but, for some reason Rocco's, as small as it is, uh, you could still

converse. And hear your conversations, you know, and not feel like...I ate downtown yesterday for lunch, empty, the whole restaurant was empty, except for three tables. And I want you to know they went bang, bang, bang. Set you right...set right together (right together), and he wanted to talk to me about his girlfriend and their future possible wedding dates and so forth, you know, he....

Don: He couldn't talk.

Evelyn: I really...I didn't feel like I wanted to talk because my voice carries (right). I'm a soft spoken person, but my voice carries.

Don: You were speaking a second ago about when you were working you know, at Tri-State Airport, you had your business out there. Uh, since then a lot of the flights have been canceled out of Tri-State Airport. (oh, have they ever) What did...the other employees at Tri-State Airport say about Rocco's? Did they eat there? Did it have...did it have a good reputation? Did Rocco's depend on a lot of airport business?

Evelyn: I don't think so, no. I think Rocco's, it's just like anything else. If you're good, word of mouth will...you don't have to advertise. (right) Word of mouth will take care of it. (the food does that) Mmm-hmm. Uh, you can fool the public part of the time, but not all the time. (that's true) And if your food goes down hill, it won't take long for your uh, clients to drop off. They just quit coming back. And they don't ...probably don't say much. Or they might. But to build your business and your clientele, word of mouth will do it. And you know, several people said to me, well, why don't you stop at Rocco's, and I said, Rocco what? (right) They said Rocco's is a dam, little Italian restaurant in Ceredo, right in the heart of town.

Don: Were you surprised when you first heard that they had a great Italian restaurant in Ceredo?

Evelyn: Yes, yes, I was. (what was your first impression?) Well, I just...(why Ceredo?)...well, of course, I can under...I can understand and appreciate that because uh, well, number one, it'd only accommodate so many people (mmm-hmm), and if it's a good restaurant, his clientele, it doesn't make any difference where the restaurant is, this is what blows my mind, why Red Lobster felt like they had to pay the City of Huntington, prime, prime, prime property price, because with the reputation they have, people would drive to Ceredo, or to the mall or to 29th street and Rt. 60, or Guyandotte as far as that goes. (right) Wherever Red Lobster was, as long as there was parking space, they would be ther. (they would be there) So, why they would go downtown and buy prime property and pay prime price, it kind of makes me scratch my head and wonder what the problem is (mm-hmm). But, as I said, Rocco's can keep their establishment filled on just reputation. (mm-hmm) And word of mouth.

Don: Do you usually eat there of an evening, or at lunch time?

Evelyn: Well, I...I'm well, I've had there as much lunch as I have at uh...it depends on you know, where I am at the time, of course. Uh, I take my clients there a lot. And if I'm in that area at lunch time, that's where we end up. And if I...'cause you like to take your clients some place, and usually by that time you're tired enough that you're willing to sit and just let 'em all do that for you. Which they do; their soups are good, their salads are good, oh, their veal parmesan is excellent (mm-hmm) of course, I love spaghetti. I enjoy Jim's Spaghetti House for spaghetti. But I...I don't very often buy spaghetti in an Italian restaurant. I usually will go with one of their other specialties that I can't get anywhere else. Now one time I had a meatball sandwich, which was delicious. Don't ask me how it was made. Of course, I like ground beef. Uh, their veal parmesan is excellent. Their wines that they put on the table as you know, the house wine, (mmm-hmm), is a good wine. Uh, which I think is smart. Instead of trying to give you the cheap...

Don: Do they have a large selection.

Evelyn: Oh, I guess they do. I don't know. I usually just ask for the house wine. (right) Because...because it's good.
(mmm-hmm)

Don: Would you recommend Rocco's to anyone in this area?

Evelyn: Oh, I'd tell anybody about Rocco's. In fact, I do. I tell a lot of people about Rocco's.

Don: Would you recommend it to an out of town person coming through?

Evelyn: Oh, certainly, and I take my out of town clients there.

Don: Would you recommend it to an individual to say Charleston or Lexington to drive to Ceredo to just eat at Rocco's?

Evelyn: If they...if they were look...if they specifically asked me for a good Italian restaurant, yeah. Oh, sure. Of course, Rocco's has now gone to Charleston. (that's true, there is a Rocco's in Charleston). Uh, they...when I go up to the Legislature, the good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, (right), I can eat at Rocco's in Charleston. 'Cause you're always looking for a good place to eat.

Don: You usually, I mean you primarily use Rocco's for uh, a business luncheon or a business dinner or...(or out with another couple in the evening), oh, in the evening. Do you meet a lot of or do you see a lot of business associates?

Evelyn: I don't use it for an everyday situation. (right) I usually end up at Jim's for fish. If it's just...I'm tired and I just don't want to go home and cook and it's close, I'll just tell

my husband meet me at Jim's or Shoney's or something like that. No, Rocco's is kind of a special uh...

Don: Do you uh, like ethnic foods?

Evelyn: Oh, yeah, yeah. 'Cause we eat at the New China 'round the corner, too, oh, yeah, the twins, my grandchildren just absolutely (they like that?), went ape over Chinese food. But they've moved to Tampa, so, I'm now on my own.

Don: Uh, when you eat at Rocco's, do you see a lot of people that you are associated with in real estate or in business for a lot of people that you know there?

Evelyn: Oh, I know a few, oh, I don't know everybody that's in there, certainly, but yeah, I recognize of course, I'm...I stay gone...(that's right, you're running for the Legislature)...in the public all the time and have for what, eight years? (mmm-hmm) And of course, then when I was in the aviation business, I was well-known, you know. So, almost just anywhere I go uh, I see somebody I know. Not always. But uh, and I, you know, I've done the all West Virginia city program, which is out calling on businesses and industries uh, and I did, I you know, I even went down to Ceredo and found out how they did, how they did their program.

Don: Rocco's is uh, is a nice, small restaurant and it's uh, when you first walk in, I remember when I first walked in, I guess my first impression was that it was uh, somewhat intimate, darker, not differently lighted than many other restaurants here in Huntington. Did uh...

Evelyn: It's not too dark. Uh, my husband you know, he doesn't like Rebels and Redcoats (right). My husband won't eat in a dark, dark restaurant 'cause he's afraid he might get some gristle or fat (right). So he won't eat by candlelight or anything intimate like that. But I don't think that uh, (they're too dark?) Rocco's is uh, well, I just think it's intimate. (mmm-hmm) And the owners are very friendly and they're kind of like Jim's, you know, Jim's out shaking hands with everybody and their brother. And uh, I'm sure that helps to build up your business. (mm-hmm) It couldn't help but do anything else. (that's true, the personal touch).

Don: You like the fact that uh, as opposed to say, I don't know, Rax, who dump their vegetables in plastic and in boiling water, Rocco's I guess makes everything from scratch, do you appreciate that in a restaurant?

Evelyn: Oh, I think so. Oh, yeah, well, there again uh, fast food restaurants turn me off. Now I do go to Rax because I do think they have a halfway decent salad bar (uh-huh). Uh, although the other day I went and it was brown, so I went over to the other side and it wasn't brown. The lettuce wasn't brown. That one had been out a lot longer, I mean a lot longer. But there's no

comparison that the only reason that I go to fast foods is time uh, and I can get a salad in a hurry. I very, very, very seldom eat anything but a salad at fast food restaurants?

Don: How would you rate the service at Rocco's?

Evelyn: Excellent! I've never had to uh, well, when we're out on tour, we only have so much time. Now today it took us a lot longer to get lunch than it should have. Uh, no, they've always waited on us and very promptly. It's always have been enjoyable. We're always had a big round table where it's very friendly (mmm-hmm), instead of a long, narrow one. Uh, as far as you know, compared with other good Italian restaurants, course we really don't have any other good Italian restaurants in this area (mmm-hmm) uh, Brunetti's down on 4th Avenue, now their...they have good Lasagna, I mean it's excellent. Uh, the establishment is one table I think, and he's uh mostly baking break and carryout orders. But Brunetti's, as far as the food is concerned, Brunetti's is real good.

Don: Have you ever done any carryouts at Rocco's? Or (no) do you every doggy-bagged anything home? Do they do that sometimes?

Evelyn: Oh, I'm sure of it, no. The only place I've ever doggy-bagged it across the street at the Gateway. Their fried chicken. There ain't no way I can eat all that chicken on that 3.95 special (mmm-hmm). And that's good chicken. That's about the only place I ever doggy-bag.

Don: Uh, Mrs. Richards, that's about all I had to ask you. I just wanted to get your general comments about the restaurant and I've got that, and I thank you very much. If there was anything you'd like to add...

Evelyn: You're quite welcome. I can recommend Rocco's...highly.

Don: I appreciate that. I'm sure he appreciate's that, too. (Oh, I'm sure) Then uh, I'll conclude with that. Okay, there. One last thing I wanted to ask you.

Evelyn: I tried to call him last night, to find out the age of the restaurant (oh, really?).

Don: Talking about Frank Lucente, a part owner of Rocco's, where did you first meet him? Was it in...?

Evelyn: Politics. (are you both Republicans?) Yes. (you say he's...) I had run before, before he had, and he called me up to get pointers on how to go about...(I see)...he doesn't listen too well. (laughs) He talks too much, gets himself in trouble.

Don: Wha...what...is he uh, primarily a part-time politician, part-time businessman, or is he...?

Evelyn: Well, he's never been a politician. He's...never (he's just dabbled) right, he's never won his race. But uh, you're not a politician 'til you serve. You're just a candidate for a politician (Oh, okay, I see). And since I had served, course he ran for the State Senate the first time (yes, ma'am), and it was my plan to run for the State Senate after my first but uh, I...he asked me one day, he said are you gonna run for the State Senate and I said, no. I might have played with the idea but I said, I gonna watch you know, the water, I'm gonna test the waters before I go jump in the deep end. He said, well, I'm gonna run. I said, well, under those circumstances, be my guest. So he ran, of course, he lost. His opponent was very tough to beat.

Don: When...(Bobby Nelson) Bobby Nelson? (Mmm-hmm, that's who he ran against) okay, (he's hard to beat).

Evelyn: Al Esposito couldn't do it, and he sure didn't.

Don: I must confess, when it comes to West Virginia politics, I'm not up to snuff. (no, he's State Senate) Okay.

Evelyn: So, and then I didn't win my next two races, the next two times I ran either, because of Jay's money. (that makes a big difference in this town) And...of , sure..._____ street ticket.

Don: Uh, the Rockefeller money has affected economics in this...in this state.

Evelyn: Well, we're bankrupt, the state of West Virginia is bankrupt.

Don: The reason I'm asking you that is because the restaurant business is directly tied the purse strings of the customer (on, sure).

Evelyn: But you know what? These fast food restaurants are...people are eating out more. Maybe it's because both mother and father are working (mmm-hmm). I'm sure that's as healthy ['cause a lot of these restaurants do not serve vegetables (that's true) and these children are consequently not getting their vegetables. They're getting fast junk food. And uh, it's not cheap. I mean, when you take a family of five and go into a fast food restaurant, you've blown big amount (15, 20 dollars) at least. (at least) And you could go to...you could do as well at Jim's and you do get a salad with your fish and a vegetable. (right) So I don't know why you know, fast food restaurants are so popular. Now Shoney's ...I think Shoney's do a very fair job from the standpoint that if you don't have any money at all, you can go in there and eat all the soup you want for 75 cents, and I said there...there shouldn't be anybody in the city of Huntington hungry. (that's true) 'Cause all they have to do is bum 75 cents and there isn't anybody...there isn't any panhandler that couldn't get 75 cents a day. And he could go in there and load up and eat all the soup he wants and crackers for 75 cents. (and you can't

beat that) And that's soup, the potato soup, the vegetable soup, an some of ...has meat in it. The kidney meat, the vegetable soup, quite frequently. So uh...

Don: Getting back to uh, the restaurant for just a second uh, he ran once and did not win. Do you know uh (well, he's never ran for the House). Is he...is he currently running for anything?

Evelyn: He ran for the House last time and we both lost because no republican did not win. And now we're both running for the house again. (so he's running again this time) Mmm-hmm.

Don: Have you talked to him about his race and his plans? Are you...(no)...I mean, has he asked your advice again?

Evelyn: Of course he and I...oh, well, he doesn't need my advice anymore (oh). He's been a candidate...he's been a candidate out there long enough, he...he could probably tell me a few things. (mmmh) He...now he...he went at it, tooth and toenail. Really. And he's...he's got all the precinct lists and he knows who votes _____ and all that stuff. I don't have that. I don't do much on scientifically. I plant (inaudible).... (laughter)

Don: Pretty trees in the spring.

Evelyn: So uh, I'm not...I'm not a scientific politician. Uh, I'll campaign, I'll work hard, I'll service people but uh, and I, that's it, I campaign hard. And do it...you know, do it as well but I don't get down to the you know, how many votes are at each precinct and I guess that's what you call scientific campaigning (mmm-hmm). I just you know, go out after whatever's out there and I don't worry about the numbers.

Don: Oh...what are some of the issues that you both...on which you both agree?

Evelyn: Oh, well, he and I are both opposed to collective bargaining. Well of course, now...there's only one republican that I know of on a ballot that supports collective bargaining and let's see, Jack Traylor, he must have, because he was supported by the teachers associations and David Cook (mmm-hmm) and the rest of us are opposed to...that are on the ticket. Uh...oh, of course, we all support jobs. We would do anything on God's green earth that will create jobs, you know, like tax investments, whatever, try to change the tax structure, and I think with Arch in there and you know, a workable legislature, uh, he...Arch can turn the state around.

Don: Just out of curiosity, and this is the only thing that I've really been unacquainted with somewhat in WV politics and the tax structures specifically, the B & O tax. Is there an alternative to that?

Evelyn: Well, the B & O tax is a totally unfair tax. I mean, it taxes the gross and you know, you don't always make a profit on

gross (right). They should tax on net (mmm-hmm). If you make a profit, they should get a portion. Uh, now they have...there have been some small changes for the smaller businessman and in which you don't have to pay tax up to a certain point uh, on the B & O tax. So there has been a little bit of improvement on that. But the last four years the legislature has increased taxes to the taxpayers in the state of West Virginia, they've increased it a hundred percent. And most of it was on your income (mmm-hmm).

Don: That's a lot. (that's a lot) Especially since nobody's working (that's right, well) I shouldn't say nobody.

Evelyn: With no income, there's no tax paid. But uh, it's a tough burden for the rest of us. And the state consequently is not having the income that it needs, you know, Jay said he's bring business in, well, hell, 58 industries (left) had left the state of West Virginia since he's been on board. And uh, gosh...I can't remember the statistics that I heard last Saturday at the convention, but it was staggering. Uh, but anyway, we still run top in unemployment. There's...the small business, the businessman, the industry, they're loaded, they're burdened with paperwork (mmmh). We have to take that burden off them. Otherwise, you know uh, there's just no hope. If we don't get industry in here, at Huntington, I don't think Huntington will ever build up on their industry (mmmh). Uh...I think Huntington will become a service center. Basically, a medical service center. Now, we can either go with the flow of that or we can ~~block it and just be a service center~~, coal, you know, river docks and my God, they fight pollution, they...anything, any business that tries to come in, they fight it. (you're right) Except the Red Lobster. (laughs) And I don't know why. I just do not know. You kind of scratch your head.

Don: I know you're busy and you've got to get back to work, we'll stop with that. I do thank you very much. I have...I did not....

END OF INTERVIEW